

CLAIMS

1. Electronic apparatus comprising main operative functionality and a power provisioning system for powering the apparatus from an external power source, the power provisioning system comprising:
- a main power supply output for energising the main operative functionality of the apparatus when said power provisioning system is connected to said external power source, and
 - a standby power source for energising a subset of the components of the apparatus when said main power supply output is not energised,

the apparatus further comprising a self contained subsystem including a memory for storing at least one parameter reflecting an internal state of the apparatus, said self contained subsystem being powered by said standby power source and including an encoder for encoding the parameters in an output signal and a transducer for generating a wireless transmission from the output signal, which transmission can be detected in the vicinity of the apparatus, so as to enable the parameter to be received and decoded.

2. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the parameter is encoded within the transmission in a form that does not to allow a human to understand the parameter directly from the transmission.

3. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the parameter comprises a serial number of the apparatus.

4. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the parameter that is transmitted in a form that cannot be understood by a human is recorded on a surface of the apparatus.

5. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the memory stores at least two parameters and the encoder is arranged to encode in the transmission at least one parameter in a form that is understandable to a human.

6. Apparatus as claimed in claim 5 wherein the parameter that is understandable to a human is a code enabling a failing unit of the apparatus to be identified.

7. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the transmission is a sound including in-band encoded signals.

5 8. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein the transducer is a speaker or buzzer whose primary purpose is to issue sounds generated within a core-logic chipset.

9. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein the parameter is encoded
10 in the sounds using frequency shift keying.

10. Apparatus as claimed in claim 7 wherein the sounds include an embedded synchronisation pattern.

15 11. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 in the form of a personal computer, the main operative functionality including a processor and data storage means interconnected by a bus system.

12. Apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the self contained
20 subsystem is connected to a power button and includes a timer arranged to time actuation of the power button, the self contained subsystem being responsive to actuation of the power button for a certain time to initiate the transmission.

25 13. An arrangement for providing remote support services to a user of apparatus as claimed in claim 7, the arrangement comprising:

a telephone call handling system that provides at least one telephone
number that the user can call to get advice from a human support
30 agent;

a decoder within the call handling system for decoding sounds generated
by the apparatus and transmitted within a telephone call made by the
user so as to enable the apparatus to transmit the parameter to the
35 call handling system for processing without requiring the user or any support agent to directly understand the parameter from the transmission.

14. An arrangement as claimed in claim 13 wherein the call handling system is arranged to generate a database query from the parameter for retrieving for presentation to a support agent diagnostic data for the apparatus.

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15. An arrangement as claimed in claim 14 wherein the database query is transmitted over the internet to a database maintained separately from the call handling system.